

# Your School Nutrition Policy

## Sending A Consistent Message

One of the basic principles of raising young children is to be consistent about rules and consequences. It is also, for many people, one of the hardest principles to apply. In our desire to be compassionate, we can become lax; in the rush and stress of a busy day, we can become forgetful about necessary follow-through.

It is also one of the principles of a good school nutrition policy to provide a consistent message about what we want students to know and do in regards to what they eat. It is confusing and counterproductive for students to learn about the health problems caused by a high fat diet while in the classroom and then go to the school cafeteria and be offered a meal of hot dogs, potato chips, and cake. Likewise we convey a contradictory message if we strive to offer high-fiber, low-fat meals in the school food service program only to find students spending their lunch money on the chocolate bars being sold in the hallway by the student council.

Food is a very emotional and personal issue. It is neither wise nor helpful for schools to try to impose good eating habits on children by limiting choices to a few items that adults may find acceptable. Rather, studies show that good eating habits develop when:

1. Children are given a wide variety of foods to choose from with a strong emphasis on healthful, fresh and low-fat foods.
2. Food is served in a welcoming, relaxed and accepting atmosphere which respects individual needs and preferences.
3. Consistent messages are conveyed about what makes up a healthy diet, about positive eating habits, and about personal responsibility.
4. The food service program is seen as an integral part of the total school program.

The purpose of a school nutrition policy is to bring about these four conditions. By stating clearly what the policy will be regarding the content and quality of school meals (as well as the standards for sales of food which might compete with the lunch program, implementation of nutrition education, and food use guidelines for teachers) the school can create an optimal environment to foster the development of good eating habits in all students.

The development and implementation of such a policy require a combined effort. Food service programs cannot do it all. In most schools that have successfully implemented this kind of policy, it has been the product of a group of interested people. Many schools set up a Nutrition Committee, made up of parents, teachers, community members and the food service staff. These committees can draft a policy that establishes the conditions for the development of life-long, healthful eating habits.

There are many people in the school with expertise and interest to contribute to this effort. Physical education teachers and coaches, family and consumer science teachers, school nurses, early childhood educators, and vocational culinary arts instructors are all potential allies in this endeavor. While the food service staff explains the limits and possibilities of the school lunch and breakfast programs, others can share their expectations, and visions. Some may be able to provide concrete information about student and community needs, while others may offer solutions to mutually identified problems.

Recognizing the value of school meals and good nutrition in schools, the Vermont State Board of Education adopted a School Nutrition Policy in 1992 and urged local Boards to do the same. A copy of that policy as well as suggestions for a process to adopt a local policy can be found on the following pages.

"The school environment can powerfully influence students' attitudes, preferences, and behaviors related to food. Without a coordinated nutrition policy, schools risk negating the health lessons delivered in the classroom and cafeterias by allowing actions that discourage healthy eating behaviors."

*Guidelines for School Health Programs*  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
1996

# VERMONT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

## SCHOOL NUTRITION POLICY STATEMENT

The Vermont State Board of Education recognizes that:

1. Vermont children are growing up hungry.
2. This hurts their ability to learn, to succeed in school, to develop into healthy and productive adults.
3. Resources available to correct this problem are untapped.
4. It is not "someone else's" problem. It is society's problem.
5. It will persist unless our schools become stronger players in a comprehensive public effort to end childhood hunger.

To redress these problems and to assure the health and well-being of all students, the State Board believes that:

1. All schools should participate in the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program.
2. School Food Service Programs should model healthy eating habits by offering students an attractive variety of highly nutritious foods and meals that meet the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.
3. Schools should practice the principles of good nutrition. All school activities including fund raising, classroom parties, and incentive awards should reflect the same sound nutrition practices that are taught in the classroom and implemented in the cafeteria.
4. Where appropriate, school nutrition programs should support students' growth and nutritional needs by offering after school snack programs and Summer Food Service Programs.
5. Modern school food service programs are complex operations that require qualified and professionally trained managers. Effective program administration should be promoted by the establishment of supervisory district food service managers who could oversee the operations of several schools' programs.

Therefore, the Board recommends that all school boards in Vermont adopt a School Nutrition Policy which contains these elements:

- Recognition that the school food service program is an integral part of the school environment
- Food service guidelines which promote the implementation of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, and encourage healthy choices
- Guidelines on competitive foods and non-cafeteria food sales
- Encouragement of participation by all students in the food service programs in such a way that promotes applications for free and reduced price meals and doesn't stigmatize students who receive those benefits
- Establishment of greater collaboration between the cafeteria and the classroom including nutrition education for adults and students
- Professional development for food service staff
- Parent, student and community involvement
- Standards for the environment in which food is served, including sufficient meal time

The Board further believes that some guidance and limitations on food choices in the school environment are needed to foster a lifetime of healthful eating habits. To safeguard the health of students, the Vermont State Board of Education recommends that local governing boards adopt the following policies:

- Certain foods which contribute little other than calories should not be sold on school campuses. These foods include carbonated beverages, nonfruit soft drinks, candies in which the major ingredient is sugar, frozen nonfruit ice bars, and chewing gum with sugar.
- Snack foods which are available at times other than meal times should be of good nutritional quality. Recommended snack foods include nuts, dried and fresh fruits, frozen and regular yogurt, juices, seeds, cheese, sandwiches and milk.
- Food offered for sale as money-making projects for schools should also be of good nutritional quality. These foods should reflect the concepts from health and nutrition education taught in the classroom.

The Board is committed to forging education, health, nutrition and business partnerships to develop broad new strategies with the goal of resolving childhood hunger and assuring nutritional adequacy for all students.

## DEVELOPING A SCHOOL NUTRITION POLICY

### **I. Why is a school nutrition policy important?**

- A. Because foods served at a school should be a model for healthy eating practices
- B. To establish the school food service program as an important part of the overall comprehensive school health program
- C. To ensure high nutrient quality and school meals that conform to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans
- D. To ensure that foods served at school address modern nutritional needs
- E. To provide a consistent message to students about nutrition and health, offer them an opportunity to develop healthy eating habits, and practice making healthy choices
- F. To enhance the role of the school food service program as an integral part of the educational environment

### **II. What is a school nutrition policy?**

- A. It establishes the school's philosophy, standards, and behaviors regarding foods sold and served at school.
- B. It establishes specific local standards for the school meals programs, as appropriate
- C. It can establish standards for professional development and nutrition education

### **III. Why have a school nutrition committee?**

- A. Parents, students, teachers and administrators become involved in the food service program, providing support for a high quality program and ensuring that the program is responsive to customer needs
- B. Provides committee members with an opportunity to learn about and support good nutrition and health
- C. Helps make sure that the food service program is included in the school's overall planning and goal development

## WHAT DOES A NUTRITION POLICY ADDRESS?

### **I. The Food Service Program**

#### *A. Menus and food quality*

1. student/faculty involvement
2. menu evaluation
3. variety of offerings
4. nutrition guidelines
5. preparation techniques

#### *B. Cafeteria atmosphere*

1. adequate eating time
2. adequate space
3. positive supervision
4. role modeling at mealtime
5. 5-senses test - see, smell, hear, touch, taste
6. customer service

#### *C. Nutrition education*

1. integral part of curriculum
2. cafeteria as learning environment

### **II. Training/Professional Development**

#### *A. Food service staff*

1. professional development plans
2. standards for food service staff
3. team building with faculty, administration and community

#### *B. Teacher in-service*

1. nutrition education
2. classroom-cafeteria integration

### **III. Food Outside the Cafeteria**

#### *A. Vending machines and school stores*

#### *B. Fund raising activities*

#### *C. Class parties and reward systems*

#### *D. After school activities and sports programs*

#### *E. Catering*

### **IV. Nutrition Education/Comprehensive School Health Program**

#### *A. Program coordination*

#### *B. Curriculum*

# SAMPLE SCHOOL NUTRITION POLICY

Lincoln Elementary School  
Board of Director's Policy

Policy Area: SCHOOL NUTRITION  
Policy Subject: FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM

Section 2000

The Lincoln School Board recognizes its responsibility to create a healthy school environment by offering a quality Food Service Program. The Food Service Program will meet all the requirements as defined in the National School Lunch and Breakfast Program. The goal of the Food Service Program is to serve the best possible meal to the most students possible. The purpose of the Food Service Program is to:

- Provide children with a wide variety of foods to choose from with a strong emphasis on healthful, fresh and low-fat foods.
- Serve food in a welcoming, relaxed and accepting atmosphere which represents individual needs and preferences.
- Promote consistent messages about what constitutes a healthy diet, positive eating habits and personal responsibility
- Convey the school food service program as an integral part of the total school program.

## **Cafeteria Atmosphere**

- Students will be provided with adequate eating time and space.
- Role modeling at mealtime and positive supervision will be assured by the school and lunch staff.
- Emphasis will be placed on customer service.

## **Nutrition Education:**

- There will be integration with the curriculum.
- The cafeteria will be viewed as a learning environment.

## **Training and Professional Development:**

- The Food Service Manager will yearly develop professional development plans with the school administration.
- Standards shall be determined and followed by the Food Service Staff, Faculty, Administration and Community.
- Food Service Staff will participate in basic standards courses and other training opportunities presented at the Federal, State and Local levels.

## **Collection of Funds: Roster Based System:**

Qualifying students will receive Free or Reduced meals per federally defined guidelines. Students should bring money for meals in an envelope marked with their name. Students eligible for free meals will also

turn in an envelope. The money will be recorded on a roster or checklist. Children will be individually marked off on a checklist or on the accounting roster as they receive their meal. The checklist will be coded so that meal categories can be identified, but are not overt. The checklist will be later compared to a roster of eligible children to determine meal category.

Families will not be allowed to charge meals in excess of \$40. When this occurs:

1. The Food Service Manager will notify the parents, in writing, of the balance due with a request that the payment be made within three (3) days. A copy will be provided to the Principal. Parents may make other arrangements with the Manager or Principal. Students may continue to purchase lunches and/or breakfast on a cash basis.
2. If payment is not received within the allocated time and other arrangements have not been made, the Food Service Manager will contact the family by phone to request payment within three (3) days of the date of conversation. In cases where there is no telephone contact possible, a written notice marked "FINAL" will be sent through the U.S. Postal Service.
3. If payment is not received, the Food Service Manager will work with the parents to collect the funds.

The Lincoln School Board further believes that some guidance and limitations on food choices in the school environment are needed to foster a lifetime of healthful eating habits. To safeguard the health of students the following will be established:

- Certain foods, which contribute little or other than calories, will not be sold at school. These foods include carbonated beverages, non-fruit soft drinks, candies in which the major ingredient is sugar, frozen non-fruit bars, and chewing gum with sugar.
- Snack foods, which are available at times other than meal times, will be of good nutritional quality.

Reference: Title 16: 1261a, 1262a, 1264, 1265

Reviewed by Board: May 21, 1998  
Approved for Posting: May 21, 1998  
Posted for Adoption: May 26, 1998  
Adopted by Full Board: July 16, 1998  
Effective Date: July 16, 1998